

WorkFirst *Study*

3000
Washington Families

Employment for 1999 and 2000 TANF Recipients

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April 2002

This report describes data from the WorkFirst Study (WFS). The sample was drawn from the statewide list of adults receiving welfare assistance in March 1999 (1999 cohort) and October 2000 (2000 cohort). The 1999 cohort respondents were interviewed in 2000 and again in early 2001. The 2000 cohort respondents were interviewed in early 2001. This report uses data from 3,037 interviews in the first year, 1,955 re-interviews with the 1999 cohort, and from 1,334 interviews with the 2000 cohort.

The focus of this report is the employment of WFS respondents. Using self-reported data from the survey and data from the Unemployment Insurance earnings files, the report looks at the employment experience of WFS respondents over time.

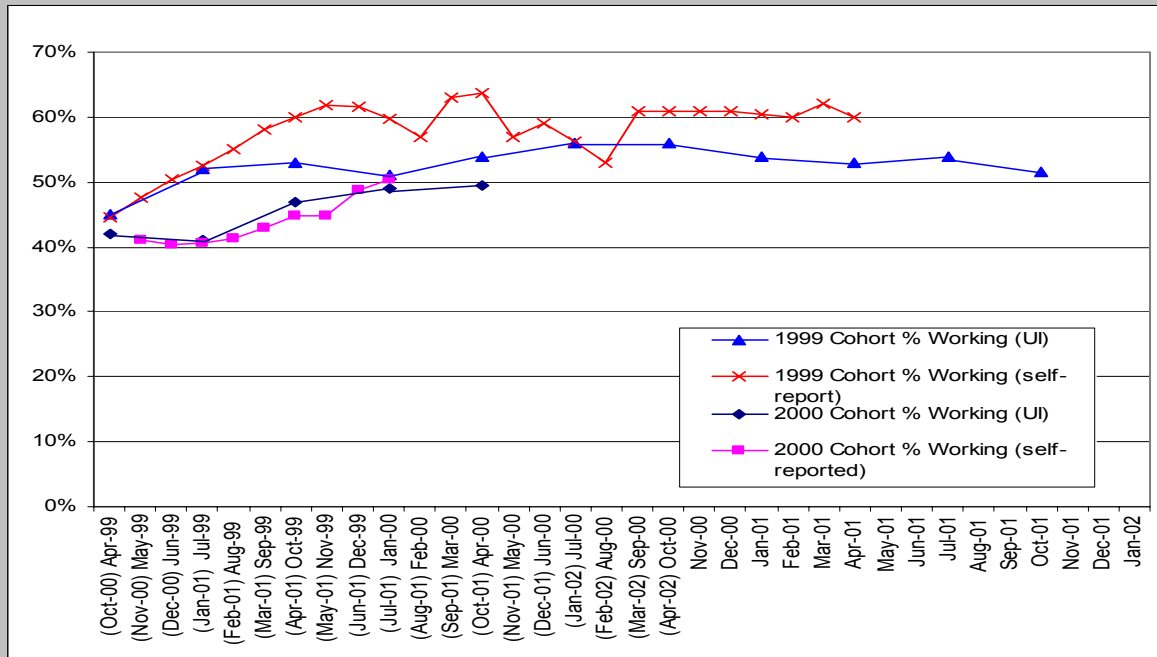
This report examines the percent of WFS respondents employed over time, median wages and earnings, hours of work per week, length of jobs held, reasons for leaving work, and job characteristics.

FINDINGS

- **More WFS respondents were working over time. Sixty percent of the 1999 cohort and 50 percent of the 2000 cohort were employed in early 2001.**
- **Median wages have increased over time to over \$8 per hour for 1999 cohort workers and \$7.25 for 2000 cohort workers.**
- **Average hours worked stayed constant over time at 30 per week for 2000 respondents, but grew to an average of 38 per week for the 1999 cohort workers.**
- **Respondents from the 1999 cohort are holding more recent jobs longer than earlier jobs.**
- **Almost half of all respondents reported working evening or weekend hours in their most recent job. About a third reported hours that change each week.**
- **About 40 percent of the 1999 cohort workers had health insurance, sick leave, and vacation pay on their most recent job. Fewer of the 2000 cohort had these benefits.**
- **Job characteristics and health problems or pregnancy were the two most often cited reasons for leaving a job among 1999 respondents.**

Employment

FIGURE 1: PERCENTAGE OF WFS RESPONDENTS WORKING FROM UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE (UI) AND SELF-REPORTED DATA



period between October 2000 and October 2001. In contrast, the median self-reported wage for women between the ages of 20 and 40 according to the Washington Population Survey was \$11.63 per hour.

FIGURE 2: MEDIAN HOURLY WAGES FROM UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE (UI) AND SELF-REPORTED DATA

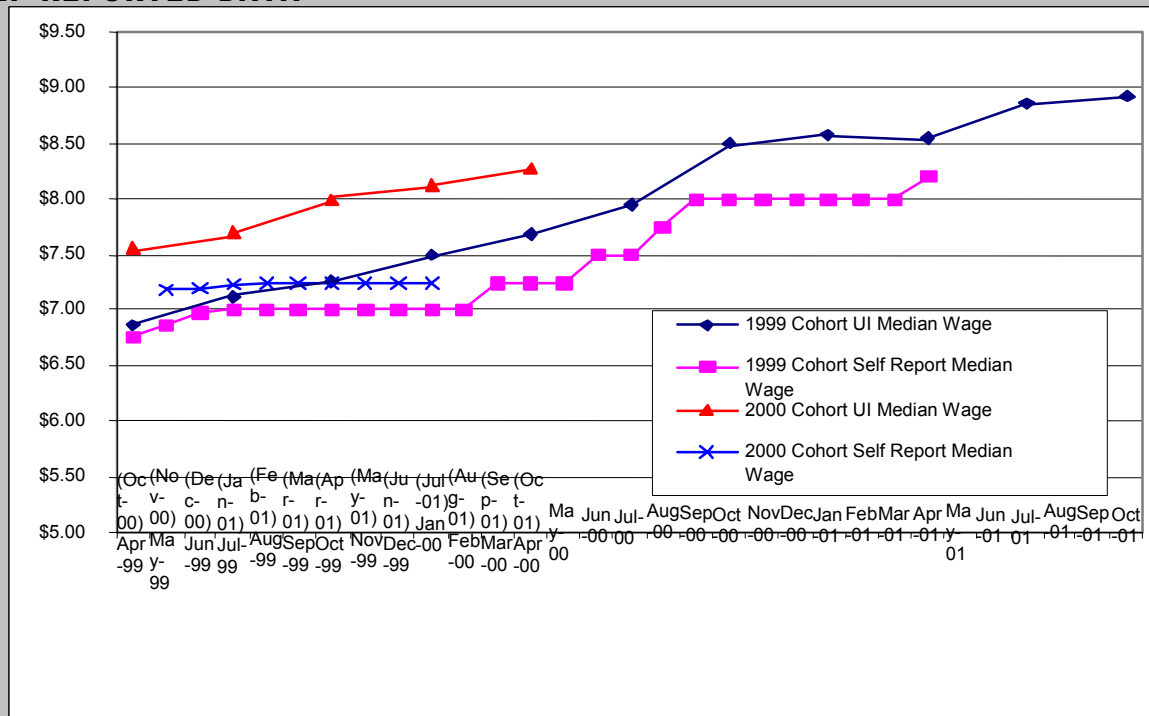


Figure 3 shows wages for respondents who were working and had self-reported wage data in March 2001, two years into the study for the 1999 cohort and five months for the 2000 cohort. Most respondents from both cohorts earned between \$6 and \$10. The 2000 WFS respondents were more likely than 1999 respondents to make less than \$10 per hour and less likely to make more than \$13. Thirty-eight percent of the 1999 cohort made over \$10 per hour as compared to 23 percent of the 2000 cohort.

FIGURE 3: HOURLY WAGES OF WORKERS IN MARCH 2001

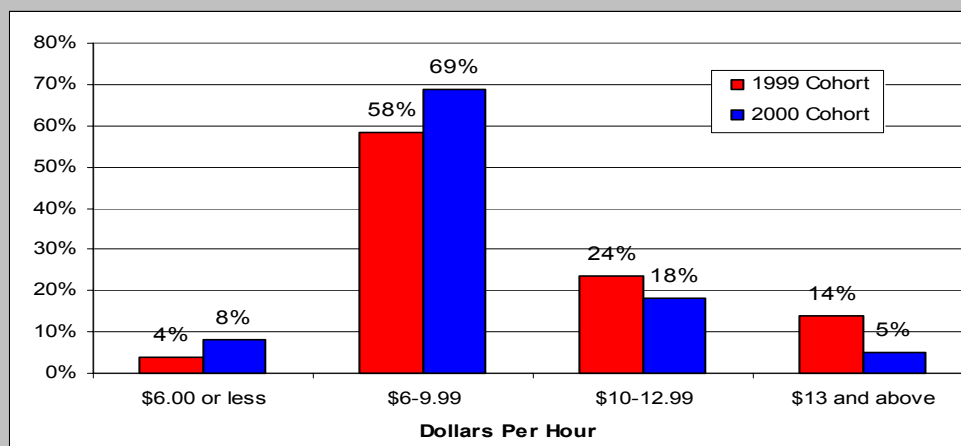


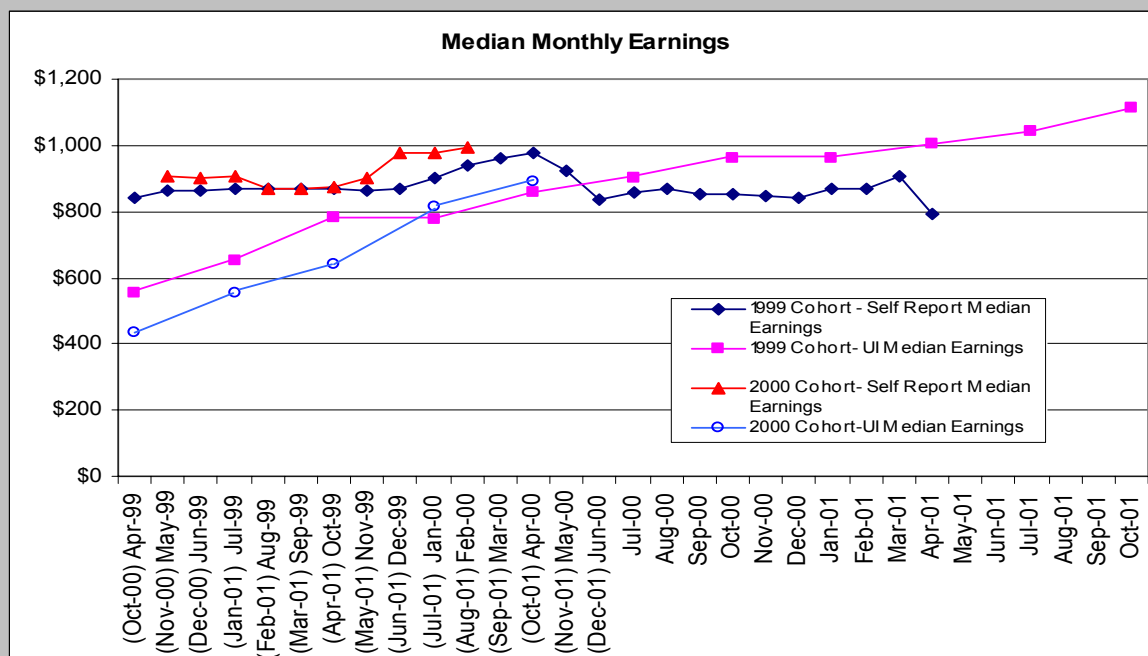
FIGURE 4: MEDIAN MONTHLY EARNINGS

Figure 4 shows median monthly earnings as reported by survey respondents and from the UI data. The UI data is reported quarterly, so we estimated monthly earnings by dividing quarterly earnings by three. Early in the period, many people were not employed all three months in a quarter, so earnings averaged over three months are much lower than earnings self-reported for those working in a month. As shown in the graph, median self-reported monthly earnings hovered between \$800 and \$1000 for both cohorts. However, UI median monthly earnings, although much lower to start with, rose steadily over time for both cohorts, from around \$600 a month for the 1999 cohort to almost \$1100 per month at the end of a two and a half year period. For the 2000 cohort, median UI earnings rose from a little over \$400 a month to over \$900 per month one year later. Median earnings increased in the Fall of 2001 for those working.

Hours Worked Per Week

Figure 5 shows the median self-reported hours worked per week for the 1999 and 2000 respondents who were working. The median hours worked per week stayed constant for the 2000 respondents at 30 hours per week, with the exception of July 2001 when it rose to 32. However, the median hours for the 1999 cohort rose slowly over time from 32 hours in April 1999 to 38 hours two years later.

FIGURE 5: MEDIAN SELF-REPORTED HOURS WORKED PER WEEK

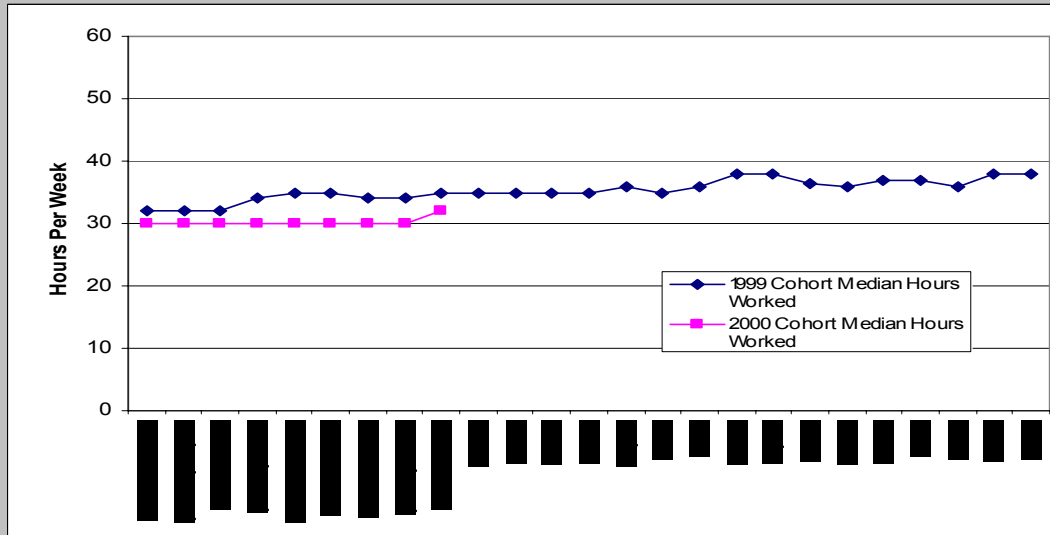
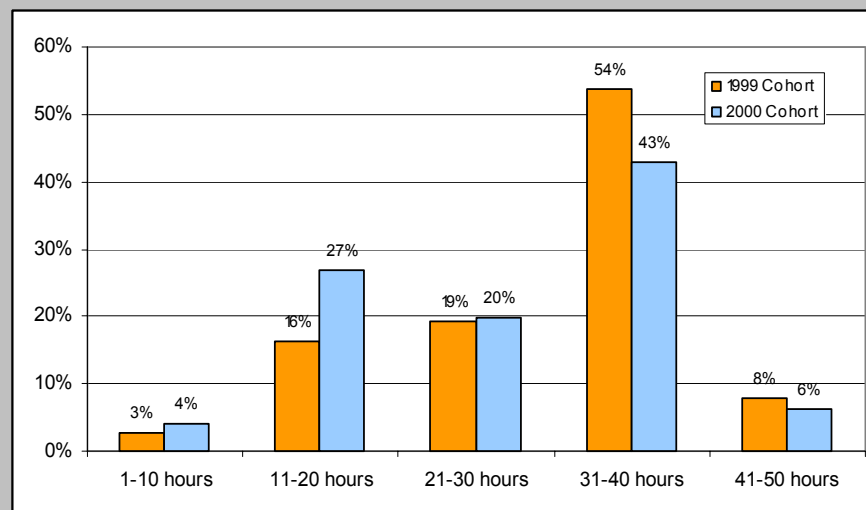


Figure 6 shows the number of hours worked per week for those employed in March 2001. Most respondents worked between 31 and 40 hours per week. The 1999 cohort was more likely to work more than 30 hours per week in March 2001 (62 percent of the 1999 respondents versus 49 percent of 2000 respondents). Similarly, respondents in the 2000 cohort were more likely to work fewer than 30 hours per week (51 percent of 2000 cohort versus 38 percent of the 1999 cohort). In comparison, female respondents of the Washington State Population Survey between the ages of 20 and 40 had a median of 40 hours worked per week at their primary job.

**FIGURE 6:
SELF-REPORTED
HOURS WORKED
PER WEEK FOR
THOSE EMPLOYED
IN MARCH 2001**



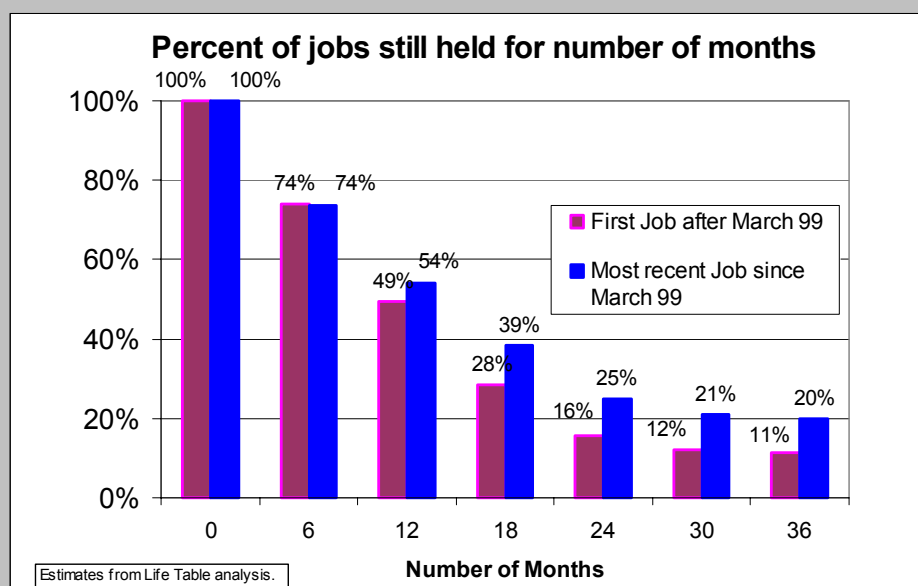
Length of Jobs Held by the 1999 Cohort

Respondents from the 1999 cohort are holding more recent jobs longer than earlier jobs. Figure 7 shows the estimated proportion of jobs being held by time period for first jobs after March 1999 and the most recent jobs (through the 2001 survey). Half of first jobs were held for at least a year, but 54 percent of the most recent jobs are expected to last that long. Similarly, 16 percent of first jobs and 25

percent of the most recent jobs are expected to last two years.

Overall, respondents held their first jobs after March 1999 for an average of 12 months. The most recent jobs held by respondents are expected to last for 14 months.

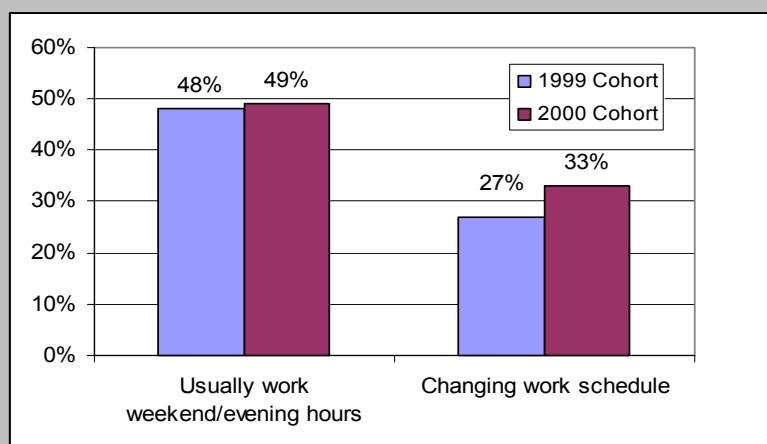
**FIGURE 7:
LENGTH OF JOBS
HELD FOR 1999
COHORT**



Evening and Weekend Hours and Variable Shift Work

Figure 8 shows that almost half of the WFS respondents from both cohorts reported working evening or weekend hours on a regular basis in their most recent job as of the 2001 survey. Twenty-seven percent of the 1999 cohort reported having a work schedule that changes significantly from week to week. Slightly more of the respondents from the 2000 cohort reported changing shifts (33 percent), perhaps because they are newer to the labor market.

**FIGURE 8:
PERCENTAGE WITH
EVENING OR WEEKEND
WORK HOURS OR
VARIABLE WORK
HOURS IN MOST
RECENT JOB**

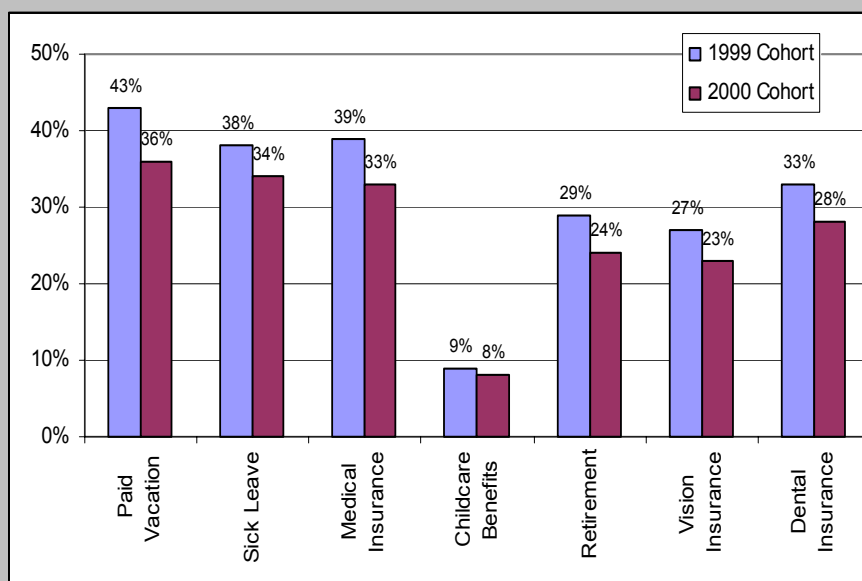


Benefits

Figure 9 shows the proportion of workers with employer-provided benefits for their most recent job. The 1999 cohort workers were more likely to receive every type of benefit on their most recent job than were those in the 2000 cohort, again reflecting changes due to work experience. The rates for the 2000 cohort are similar to those reported by the 1999 cohort in the first survey.

Almost 40 percent of 1999 cohort workers received employer-provided medical insurance, but only 33 percent of the 2000 cohort. Sick leave and paid vacation were also available to about 40 percent of the 1999 cohort and a third of the 2000 cohort workers. Retirement, vision care, and dental insurance were provided at slightly lower levels. Few workers received childcare benefits from employers.

**FIGURE 9:
PERCENTAGE OF
1999 AND 2000
COHORT
RESPONDENTS
RECEIVING BENEFITS
IN THEIR MOST
RECENT JOB**



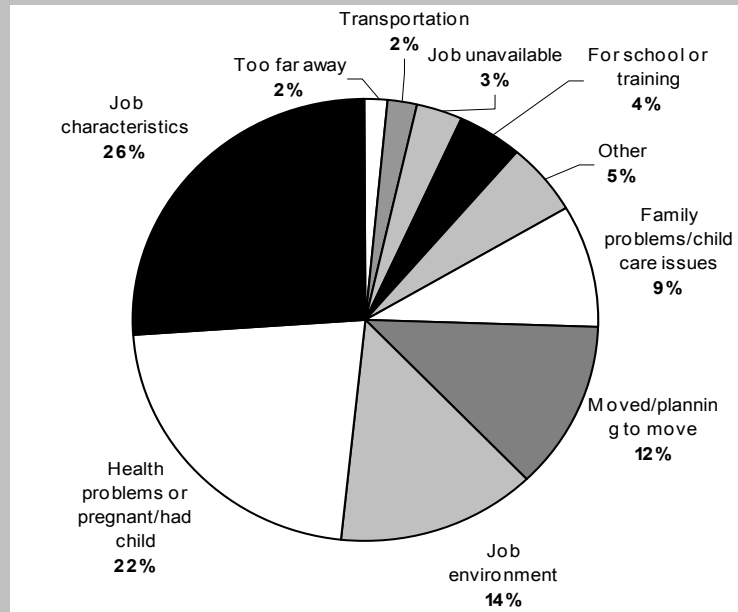
Leaving Jobs

Respondents from the 1999 cohort who reported leaving a job were asked why they left (for up to 6 jobs) in the 2001 survey. Over a quarter of job-leavers gave reasons relating to the job characteristics, including low pay, no benefits, no advancement opportunities, and not enough or too many hours. Some also said they left to get a different or better job.

Over a fifth of leavers said that they left due to health problems (either physical or emotional health) or because they were pregnant or went on maternity leave. Fourteen percent reported a problem with the job environment (safety or sanitation issues, problems with managers or coworkers including sexual harassment or racism, they didn't like the job, or not being paid regularly). Over a tenth moved or were planning to move, and just under a tenth had family problems including ill family members, domestic violence, or childcare difficulties.

Five percent gave other reasons and 4 percent left to go to school or training. For 3 percent, the positions were seasonal or temporary, or the business was having problems. Two percent left the jobs because of transportation problems and another 2 percent reported that the job was too far away.

**FIGURE 10: REASONS WHY
RESPONDENTS LEAVE JOBS**



There also were some differences between the reasons why people left the first three jobs they had compared to why they left more recent jobs. Respondents were asked about up to six jobs that they held since their 2000 interview. Nearly twice as many people left due to job environment in the first three jobs as the last three jobs (from 13 percent in jobs 1 to 3 and 25 percent in jobs 4 to 6). Only half as many people left because they were moving in the last three jobs as the first three jobs. All other differences were not significant.